

OPPORTUNITIES HARTFORD

WHITE PAPER: JOBS

I. Highlights

- ❖ According to the Economic Policy Institute, if job creation remained as slow as it was in October 2010, it would take 20 years for the country to reach the pre-recession unemployment rate of 5 percent. To narrow that time frame to five years, the country would have to create 300,000 jobs each month.¹
- ❖ Since 2010, Connecticut experienced the third slowest job growth in the country, with only 15,900 jobs created.²
- ❖ In the city of Hartford, 38,288 jobs were lost from 1990 until 2008³
- ❖ From 2009-2010, the Hartford area saw a loss of 5,861 jobs, making it the worst in terms of annual average employment for the state.⁴
- ❖ Since 1990, Hartford has lost 56,000 high-skilled jobs and replaced only 40,000 with low-skill, low-wage jobs.⁵
- ❖ During the first two quarters of 2010, Connecticut public and private employers added almost 9,000 jobs, but in the third quarter of 2010 eliminated almost 11,000 jobs.⁶
- ❖ Workers of color were disproportionately affected by unemployment. What is considered a recession for White workers has been called a depression for Black and Hispanic workers. Connecticut's unemployment rate in 2009 for Whites was 7 percent, for Hispanics 13 percent, and for Blacks 16 percent.⁷

II. Opportunities Hartford

Hartford provides many opportunities for the people who live, learn, work, play, and worship in Connecticut's Capitol City. However, many of the opportunities designed to improve the education and of residents, and enhance their prospects for better jobs, are limited in scope and not well coordinated. On their own, many promising opportunities are not backed by sufficient resources or enough capacity to make a community-wide impact.

Opportunities Hartford is a citywide effort intended to enhance and expand existing educational, job and income opportunities in Hartford. With resources tight, the economy only slowly recovering, and too many citizens living below the poverty level, it is even more critical for the city's leadership to set strategic priorities for improving educational results. Through strong executive leadership and support from all sectors, Hartford can align and coordinate the most promising efforts that now exist, while also adapting promising practices from other cities.⁸

Many Connecticut families continue to face the increasing turmoil of unemployment. Children are by far the most vulnerable during times of economic downturn. Decline in family income can negatively affect children by reducing the quality of food a family can afford, access to timely medical care if insurance is lost, and access to child care and preschool as family income slips. A family's anxiety level is shown to heighten during times of family unemployment, leaving the likelihood of domestic violence and in-home stress to heighten.⁹ There is an opportunity to connect families in poverty with the effective resources and supports to counter the stress and overcome the barriers of concentrated poverty.

III. The Issue

Hartford faces a dual problem: high unemployment for city residents compared to residents of the surrounding region and the loss of jobs in the city since 1960.¹⁰ This issue is compounding for some who may not have the basic skills to find or keep a job, including resume building, understanding the importance of punctuality, social skills which allow them to interact well with co-workers, and other necessary skills for success in the workforce. Others returning to the workforce may face the additional barrier of former incarceration, as 2,601 of the 18,416 currently incarcerated cite a Hartford address.¹¹ To help address this, the CT Works Center, STRIVE, and other Hartford non-profits offer resume and employment readiness training for the general public, as well as some targeted to specific populations such as those formerly incarcerated.

The unemployment rate in the United States is currently 9.1 percent. While the state's unemployment rate is slightly above the national average, Connecticut's Capital City has an unemployment rate of 16.2 percent.¹² Even prior to the existing economic downturn, many families earning less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) had at least one full-time worker, indicating that part of the problem is low pay, as well as lack of jobs. In almost half of these families, no parent has attended college. Families such as these are the ones most distressed by patterns of state-wide job loss, the trend of moving employers out of state and out of the city, and growing income disparities.¹³ The Connecticut Department of Labor reports that the construction trade continues to suffer; between June 2007 and August 2010, the sector lost 27 percent of its jobs—500 in August 2010 alone.¹⁴

The key to a competitive economy lies in a highly educated workforce. While Hartford provides many opportunities for residents, less than 3,000 out of 34,000 males over 25 in Hartford attained a bachelor's degree in 2009. Of 38,600 females over 25 in Hartford, less than 4,000 of this same population earned their bachelor's degree that same year.¹⁵ Many Hartford residents are in need of enhanced training and employment resources to find job opportunities in a difficult economy.¹⁶ Over the past 30 years, the percentage of Connecticut's labor force with a bachelor's degree has increased 15 percent to follow the demand for high skilled labor. This leaves individuals without any higher education at a larger disadvantage than ever before. Furthermore, many of the hardest hit sectors were those employing less educated individuals. Connecticut's construction sector is 25 percent smaller than it was in March 2008 before the recession.¹⁷

In order to ensure a skilled and growing workforce, various goals need to be made priority. Such goals include aligning job training with employer needs and emerging jobs, attracting new skilled workers to become residents, and encouraging youth employment placement programs. Access to jobs must also be enhanced, which includes ensuring access to job-funding programs for residents and businesses alike. The business community must also be supported as it works to attract new employers.¹⁸

To lead Connecticut families on a path to self-sufficiency while at the same time providing businesses with an educated and skilled workforce and increasing job opportunities, Connecticut policymakers must prioritize the state's education system and expand opportunities in Hartford. Over time, opportunities must be expanded enough to improve the quality of life and economic status of low-income Hartford families.¹⁹

IV. The Opportunities

A. Enhance Sector-based Career Pathways

There is an opportunity to build upon the sector-based "jobs funnel" program managed by Capital Workforce Partners, which was working well before the recession in training and placing workers in the construction trade. This effort can be bolstered if UConn's School of Social Work and UConn Health Center build facilities in Hartford, as well as by downtown housing construction, school construction, and I-84 reconstruction.

Other sector-based opportunities that have been piloted and which can be pursued are allied health and advanced manufacturing. Additional in-demand jobs exist in the areas of technology, engineering and math, as well as green jobs. Opportunities for innovation and new approaches to job creation, including micro-enterprise, are also promising.

❖ *Other Opportunities:*

B. Initiate MDC jobs program for sewer-separation project

The Metropolitan District Commission's project designed to keep sewage from flowing into basements and waterways in Hartford's North End received the largest single share of the \$48.5 million in federal stimulus money earmarked for Clean Water Act work in Connecticut. State officials explained the decision to fund the sewer and storm-water separation project by saying that it's easier to track job retention and creation by designating one major stimulus project. MDC officials told The Hartford Courant in early April 2009 that two of the five phases of the work on the aging, flood-prone sewer system would create 54 jobs, based on estimates from the subcontractor.²⁰

- ❖ Opportunity: The Metropolitan District, acting through the Program Management Unit for the Clean Water Project, identified the need for community based organization to be involved with sewer separation projects in the various Hartford neighborhoods in March of 2009. Because of the need for significant resident involvement, job training programs and community outreach services would benefit both the Hartford community in need of jobs as well as the MDC's sewer-separation project.
- ❖ Opportunity: University of Connecticut has recently expanded programs formerly available only at the Storrs or West Hartford campuses into Downtown Hartford, and is exploring the possibility of moving the School of Social Work, or select classes, there as well.

❖ *Other Opportunities:*

C. Work with business community to retain existing employers and attract new employers

Other job opportunities can be pursued by working with the business community to retain employees and attract new ones.

- ❖ Opportunity: The Hartford's plans a \$7 million philanthropic initiative to revitalize the Asylum Hill neighborhood, including a contribution to partially fund the city's plans for purchasing, taking down and improving the vacant Capitol West property and supporting neighborhood schools and nonprofit service providers.
- ❖ Opportunity: The Common Ground Swift Factory plan Common Ground, a New York-based nonprofit that rehabilitated the Hollander building downtown into mixed-income housing, wants to rehabilitate an abandoned factory in the North End into a mixed-used development to anchor the community as an urban agriculture and green energy incubator, housing for seniors and artists, and performance space.

- ❖ Opportunity: The Bridges Program prepares CNAs (certified nurse aides) for more positions in allied health or related fields. The program is a partnership of Local 1199, Capital Workforce Partners, Capital Region Education Council and Capital Community College. It links currently employed, low-skill workers with higher-wage, higher skill jobs in the City's growing health care community.
- ❖ Opportunity: Capital Workforce Partners operates employer demand-driven training programs for allied health, manufacturing/STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and green jobs. Working with local employers and community colleges, these programs help prepare area youths and adults for in-demand positions that provide sustainable wages.
- ❖ *Other Opportunities:*

¹ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Bridging Tough Times for Connecticut's Families: 2010 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

² United States Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³ Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. Town Profile, Hartford (2010).
<<http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/Customer-Images/2010/Hartford2010.pdf>>

⁴ Connecticut Department of Labor and The Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development. The Connecticut Economic Digest. August 2011.

⁵ Carstensen, Fred. "What It Will Take to Turn the State Around." *Hartford Courant*. 28 March 2010.

⁶ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Bridging Tough Times for Connecticut's Families: 2010 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

⁷ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Bridging Tough Times for Connecticut's Families: 2010 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

⁸ Opportunities Hartford 2011 Progress Report

⁹ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Bridging Tough Times for Connecticut's Families: 2010 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

¹⁰ Slepiski, Joseph. "A Tale of Large Cities: Population and Jobs May 2000." Department of Economic and Community Development.

¹¹ Connecticut Department of Correction 2010 Annual Report

¹² Connecticut Department of Labor. *Connecticut Labor Market Information*. Last updated 20 May 2011.
<<http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/laus/lmi123.asp>>.

¹³ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Sowing Prosperity: Low-Income Working Families and Connecticut's Economic Future*. September 2010.

¹⁴ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Bridging Tough Times for Connecticut's Families: 2010 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book*.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey. *Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over*.

¹⁶ Hartford Opportunities Workgroup Memo. *The Landscape of Educational, Job & Income Opportunities in Hartford & The City's Plan for Enhancing and Expanding Existing Opportunities for the People of Hartford*. 4 February 2011.

¹⁷ Connecticut Voices for Children. *State of Working Connecticut, 2010*.

¹⁸ Hartford Opportunities Workgroup Memo. *The Landscape of Educational, Job & Income Opportunities in Hartford & The City's Plan for Enhancing and Expanding Existing Opportunities for the People of Hartford*. 4 February 2011.

¹⁹ Connecticut Association for Human Services. *Sowing Prosperity: Low-Income Working Families and Connecticut's Economic Future*. September 2010.

²⁰ Kovner, Josh. "Federal Stimulus Money to Help MDC Storm-Water Project in Hartford's North End." *Hartford Courant*. 29 April 2009.